

The Plains of Abraham

By JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

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WNU Service.

CHAPTER X—Continued

But this happier spirit could not endure long with the people. Death had settled on them heavily. No word had come from Tiaoga and his warriors. There were whisperings that they had been annihilated in battle and would never return. Anxiety grew into fear, fear into certainty. The grimness of a tragedy darker than the sable robes of the priest hovered over Chenusfo.

In their happiness, Jeems and Tolnetta did not feel the undercurrent of change about them. Their abiding place became a home whose roots spread so securely that death could not have torn them up. The cloud of the tragedy through which they had passed was a curtain vaguely soft and distant behind them; they thought of it, they talked of it, and dreams sometimes awakened Tolnetta to find comfort in Jeems' arms. But its memories did not wound so deeply. The spirits of Tonteur and of Jeems' mother drew nearer to them each day, strengthening with invisible chains the love which bound them. It was the Thrush who first made them see what was happening about them. As days and weeks passed without word from Tiaoga, the fear that Shindas was dead clutched her with an evil hand. She began to avoid Tolnetta and kept to herself. The hardness which had settled in the faces about her came into her own. She was a changed Mary Dagblen. She was Opitchi the Seneca.

It was this change in the one she had come to regard as a sister which started Tolnetta into a realization of the situation which was gathering about her and Jeems, and she was now destined to witness in all of its savagery that streak in Indian character which arouses hate and the desire for vengeance in the face of adversity at the hands of human enemies. Jeems marked its rising symptoms. He was no longer greeted with friendliness. Men were sullen and aloof, and women tolled without their usual chatter. Death and misfortune had ridden too hard, and human nerves were at the breaking point. Chenusfo was like a handful of powder ready for the touch of fire.

Then came the lightning flash. It was an afternoon late in May when Shindas appeared in Chenusfo. He was alone. His arms and shoulders were hacked and cut and some of the wounds were scarcely healed. A scar lay across his cheek. His moccasins were in tatters, and his eyes held the ferocious light of a wolf that had been hunted. He made no effort to soften the news of which he was the bearer. He had come from the border of the Cayuga country as a messenger from Tiaoga and was many hours ahead of his comrades. Tiaoga was returning with nine of his thirty warriors. The others were dead.

This tragedy was a cataclysmic one even for a tribe of the most warlike of the Six Nations. Nothing had equaled it in Seneca history for generations. Twenty were dead out of thirty—the flower of Chenusfo—the very sinew of Tiaoga's people!

Shindas waited until his words sunk like bars of iron into the hearts of the men and women about him. He waited until there seemed no relief from the despair which settled over them, and then slowly gave the names of those who had been slain by their enemies. A white man had killed three of the twenty warriors. He was a prisoner now—with Tiaoga. They had put out his eyes so that he could not see. They had built a fire around him in which it had been their intention to see him die. But in the last moment when the flames were scorching him Tiaoga had pulled the blazing fuel away with his own hands in order that the people of Chenusfo could witness his writhings at the fire stake.

After this one might have thought that mad men and women and not a grief-stricken people filled Chenusfo. For hours the lament of the women did not die out. Still Tolnetta saw no tears. Her horror increased as she observed the preparations for vengeance; the rigging of a hole and the setting in it of a tall stake, all by women's hands; the gathering of pitchy fuel by little children and their mothers; the transformation of friends she had known into fiends whose eyes filled with hatred when they looked at her. She tried to hide from these things in their home and to keep Jeems with her. Shindas came to them. He had a command from Tiaoga for Jeems. It was that Jeems should go to the village of Kanestlo seventy miles distant and bear news of a war party from that town. Shindas gave him the message and saw that he departed with it. He was no longer a brother. He disclosed no sign of pleasure when he learned that Tolnetta was Jeems' wife. Mary Dagblen found him so grimly changed that he frightened her.

Tolnetta remained alone. No one came to see her except Wood Pigeon, and the afternoon following the day of Shindas' arrival the child ran in with wide eyes to tell her that Tiaoga was approaching. They were standing

at the head of the waiting lines when Tiaoga and the remnant of his band came over the hill and across the fields. Shindas had said there was to be no physical demonstration against the prisoner, who was to be kept strong for torture at the stake. Tolnetta shivered. It was a different homecoming this time. The people were like tigers holding their passions in leash. There was something demonic in the faces of the children. Even the eyes of those whose loved ones had escaped death held only the deep-seated fire of hatred. Tiaoga came. His face was like a mask of rock as he passed so near that Tolnetta might have touched him. The prisoner followed. His clothes were torn from the upper part of his body. He was a powerfully built man with great hands and wide shoulders. On each side of him walked a warrior, for he was blind and needed guidance. His empty eye sockets, hidden by drooping lids, gave to his round red face the appearance of one walking in a ghastly sleep. Yet he was not overcome by the enormity of the catastrophe which had befallen him, nor did he betray fear of what lay ahead. He sensed the presence of the people and held his head high as if trying to see them. It was a bald head.

Tolnetta swayed backward and struggled in a moment of darkness to keep herself from falling.

The prisoner was Hepsibah Adams.

CHAPTER XI

No one but Wood Pigeon observed the faintness which came over Tolnetta. Some force had drawn a smothering curtain about her making it difficult to see or breathe. When the shock passed, they were standing alone with the mob closing in behind Tiaoga and his single captive. Its pent-up emotion burst loose in a pandemonium, and amid the excitement Tolnetta went back to the cabin which Jeems had built near Tiaoga's tepee.

At first she had regretted the absence of Jeems, but now she was glad he was gone, for the increasing tumult in the village, the chanting of death songs by the women, the screaming of children, and the yelling of savages who were working themselves into a frenzy of rage about the fire which would soon receive its victim terrified her with the growing conviction that nothing could save his uncle. If Jeems had been there, she knew he would not have seen Hepsibah Adams put to death without a struggle fatal to himself. This thought, together with the reflection that it was a fortunate chance which had sent him away, strengthened her determination to help Hepsibah, and she watched with Wood Pigeon until she saw the chief enter his tepee. Then she hurried to him, with Wood Pigeon and Odd following her.

Tiaoga's greeting held no promise. The Seneca folded his arms across his breast and regarded her calmly, revealing no gentle aspect as he spoke a few words in acknowledgment of her visit. That his prisoner bore the same relationship to Jeems which he bore to Shindas and that the man about to die was loved by Silver Heels brought no surprise or hesitation to his face. He waited patiently for her to finish, then shook his head and pointed through the door to the shadows gathering in the path of the setting sun. He stated coldly that the prisoner must die. His people demanded that the spirit of the white man who had slain three of his warriors be destroyed in flames. They would wait until it was dark, which was the tribal custom. Then the prisoner would be brought from the tepee in which he was lying bound, and the fire would be lighted.

If it were her desire, she might talk with Jeems' uncle, Tiaoga said. He was looking into the twilight when he made this concession. The Indian women at the farther end of the village were chanting more loudly as darkness came on.

Tiaoga spoke again. She must hurry. It was growing late. The captive was in Ah De Bah's

tepee, near the river, and the Tall Man and Shindas were guarding him.

He watched her depart with Wood Pigeon and Odd. Then she might have seen a change in him, a change which came when he knew he was alone.

Tolnetta was breathless when she came to Ah De Bah's home, which the hunter had set apart from the others. The Tall Man stood motionless before the door with a rifle in the crook of his arm, and Shindas sat on the ground near him. Both saw her coming. She paused a few paces from them with her mind struggling against a chagrin of uncertainty and dread. What could she say to Hepsibah Adams? How could she help him when Tiaoga and Shindas and Ah De Bah were eager for his death?

Shindas spoke a word to the Tall Man and advanced toward her. He seemed to have expected her, and pointed to the tepee. Ah De Bah did not look at her as she entered. Neither appeared to notice Wood Pigeon or the dog.

She found Hepsibah stretched out like a dead man, and knelt on the earth at his side. He was scarcely conscious of her presence until she touched him. She felt the buckskin cords at his wrists; then her hand found his sightless face.

Hending low over the doomed man she whispered:

"Hepsibah—Hepsibah Adams—I am Tolnetta Tonteur."

Shindas waited with Ah De Bah as the gloom thickened about them. After a time, they saw Wood Pigeon going toward the circle of trees. Shindas stopped her, and in answer to his question she told him Tolnetta was kneeling beside the white man and that the dog was with her.

A fresh outcry told them that at last the time had come, and Ah De Bah went to the tepee and held back the flap. He spoke to Tolnetta, calling her Sol Yan Makwun. There was no answer. He spoke again and entered. After a brief interval, his voice rose in a demand for Shindas, and the young Seneca answered it. Ah De Bah was hunting like an animal in the blackness. The tepee was empty. Tolnetta and Hepsibah Adams were gone.

Shindas did not speak. There was no light to reveal his face as he went to the edge of the river and saw that a canoe was gone. He grunted his wonder when the Tall Man joined him. The canoe had been launched within fifty paces of them, and they had not heard a sound. Words of self-abasement fell from Ah De Bah's lips. He and Shindas were like two children, and every man and woman in Chenusfo would taunt them because of the ease with which the escape had been made. But the missing canoe could not be far distant. The fugitives, one of them blind, could not possibly succeed in their flight. The night would see the white man given to the stake, and now that Silver Heels had proved himself a serpent in the tribe and a traitor to Tiaoga, she would probably die with him.

Ah De Bah made queer sounds in his chest as they ran to Tiaoga and the expectant people with him. He was not so calm as Shindas when they arrived. It was Shindas who announced the deception of the stranger whom they had accepted as the true spirit of Sol Yan Makwun. Tiaoga was coldly and terribly still. His face changed before their eyes. The furrows in it grew deeper, and it became as hard as stone in the fields. Then words came weighted with the decision of death, rising until they swelled in a passion that was like a fire consuming everything in its path. He declared that his honor and the honor of his people lay in his hands. He called on Shindas and Ah De Bah to go with him to recapture the fugitives, for this was a duty imposed on him first of all. Before the night was much older, the fire stake should have its triumph. He had forgotten the blind man, for a man without eyes was already dead. He would give to the flames the white girl who had betrayed them.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Tricky Criminals Keep Law Officers "on Edge"

Growing a beard, dyeing the hair, and staining the face and hands with a mixture of butternut oil, nutgall, and permanganate of potash, are old-time dodges that have often been very useful to the hunted man. Stained with the above mixture, a fair-skinned man becomes as swarthy as a Spaniard or Italian; it once made a burglar "on the run" so confident that he actually had the audacity to sell ice cream within a stone's throw of Scotland Yard. Perhaps the most recent dodge for criminals who are anxious to give a wide berth to the police is going on the sick list. Hospital authorities in London and the provinces are much perturbed by this new and deplorable form of trickery. At one London hospital the suspicions of the doctors were aroused by the arrival in the course of one week of several individ-

uals who, according to their own story, were in terrible pain, but whose ailments the medical men were quite unable to diagnose. The surprising speed with which these mysterious "patients" recovered at the end of a few days convinced the doctors that there was "something up." Inquiries were made, and it was learned that at least two of them were badly "wanted" in connection with a motor car theft.—London Times.

First Use of Telephone

On October 9, 1876, the first reciprocal conversation over a telephone was held over an outdoor line, two miles long, between Boston and Cambridgeport, Mass. On March 10, 1876, Professor Bell had made himself heard by Watson in another part of the same building.

Across an Arabian Desert



A Negro Family in the Outskirts of Jidda, Arabia.

(Prepared by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.)

ONE of the most outstanding explorations of recent years outside the Polar regions was made recently when Bertram Thomas, British traveler, journeyed from south to north across the Roba el Khali desert of southeastern Arabia, an area never before penetrated by a Westerner. The world's geographers and map-makers knew nothing whatever of the Roba el Khali even by reports from natives, for it is doubtful whether Arabs have been able to penetrate the sandy wastes for many centuries.

The central part of the desert was found to be covered by mile upon mile of great sand dunes, blown into gigantic waves by the wind. Near the center a sizable salt lake was discovered.

The Great Southern desert covers approximately 300,000 square miles of territory. It is a vast ellipse which is roughly 800 miles across from east to west, and 600 miles from north to south. This area, since the penetration of Central Africa, the Sahara, and central Australia, has constituted the largest blank spot on the world's maps outside the ice-covered wastes near the poles.

All around this Arabian no-man's land, the forces of civilization have played: steamers traverse the Red sea, the Indian ocean, and the Persian gulf; airplanes plying between Egypt and India have flown for years a few hundred miles to the north; great pilgrim caravans and desert armies have crossed the peninsula near its center—but always north of the dread sandy waste. Loosely organized political units hem in the desert area, with boundary lines hazy. On the north and west is the territory of the greatest Arabian state, the kingdom of Hejaz and Nejd. On the southeast is Yemen. The Hadramaut, a narrow coastal strip under British protection, touches the desert on the south. The crescent-shaped, independent state of Oman, also a coastal territory, curves around the eastern and southeastern edges of the desert.

Both nature and man have guarded the Roba el Khali against explorers. Mountains rim it on the east and south and secondary deserts hem it on the north. Before the main part of the Southern desert—the vast waste covered with sand dunes—can be reached, a six-day journey must be made—in the south and east, at least—over an almost sterile sandstone steppe. Water supplies are hardly anywhere in reach for a final dash into the sandy desert.

All around the outer rim of the desert area are tribes that have had practically no contact with outside civilization, and that are even independent of control from the nearest states. They guard their few wells and water holes jealously and in most cases look upon travelers from the outside world as meddlesome trespassers meriting death.

Physical Characteristics.

In physical character, flora, and fauna, Arabia as a whole is more like Africa than Asia. In shape, it is almost a triangle, and it runs from northwest to southeast, between 30 degrees and 12 degrees 45 minutes north latitude and between 32 degrees 30 minutes and 69 degrees east longitude. It is bounded on the east, south, and west by the Persian gulf, the Arabian sea, and the Red sea respectively; on the north it joins Syria. As Josephus of old wrote, "Arabia is a country that included Mesopotamia and the Syrian desert back of Palestine."

The length of the peninsula from the head of the Gulf of Akabah to the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, near Aden, is about 1,500 miles; its greatest breadth, in latitude 23 degrees north, from the Red sea coast on the west to Ras-al-Hadd on the east, is about 1,500 miles.

As one sails along the Red sea coast of Arabia, with the low—2,000 feet high—dry and barren mountains lying just back of sandy, empty strips of country, he is reminded of the Pacific side of Lower California above Cape San Lucas. Many small islands, hot and dry and uninhabited except

for half-wild bands of tramp fishermen, dot the map along this coast. One of these, called Parim, near the mouth of Bab-el-Mandeb straits, is occupied by a British garrison.

The southeastern coast, similarly empty and marked by sharp, jagged rocks thrust up from glistening sand beds, is broken by several good harbors, like that at Aden. This latter port is a British possession, not unlike Gibraltar. It is heavily fortified and is the entrepot of commerce between India and Europe.

Three Important Provinces.

Along the Red sea coast lie three provinces, the most important in Arabi. Yemen, the most southerly and most populous, has many arable valleys, producing coffee, figs, spices, hides, and dates. It has two port cities, Mocha and Hodida. Aseer province lies north of Yemen, and north of Aseer and extending to the Suez canal stretches the province of Hejaz, where in lie the famous Moslem cities of Mecca, and Medina.

The ancients, for convenience, or from lack of geographic knowledge, divided Arabia into three parts—the Stony, the Desert, and the Happy. Our knowledge of its map shows most of its high interior plateau occupied (except for Nejd province) by four great deserts, the Syrian, the Nejd, the Akaf, and the Roba el Khali.

The Mahrah and Hadramaut provinces, stretching for hundreds of miles above Aden, are unmapped and practically unknown.

Nejd, the great interior province north of Roba el Khali, is declared by Arabs to be the birthplace of their most cherished institutions and traditions. Nejd is isolated from the outside world by a surrounding desert girdle.

A confusion of plant life is spread over Arabia's many rich wadis (valleys) affording much "unfinished business" for eager botanists. Besides the friendly palm, such trees as the acorn, almond, chestnut, pomegranate, the "gum Arabic," the acacia, and a long list of bushes and shrubs are scattered up and down the peninsula. Then there is the "samb" or oatmeal plant of the Arabs; from its small grain they make a porridge called samb, the national breakfast food of Arabia.

But, with the exception of dates, Arabia produces few crops of any importance. Good coffee, in limited quantities, comes from Yemen. Millet, barley, and wheat are all grown, but owing to drought the crop is small and restricted to limited areas. Wherever water and soil permit, such products as rice, melons, gourds, cucumbers, cabbage, garlic, and onions are raised.

The Indian fig, the banana, the papaya (imported from India), the coconut, and the betel nut are also grown in Nejd.

Crude Agriculture.

Agriculture is crude, like that of our old American Indians. A crooked stick scratches the ground, and seed is broadcast by hand. Such arts as fertilizing, rotating crops, pruning, and cultivating receive scant consideration. Hand sickles are used for reaping; oxen tread out the grain, and it is winnowed by being thrown into the breeze. In brief, Arabia's agriculture is almost nil—barely sufficient to furnish a meager supply of food to the sparse population.

A peculiarly drab-looking desert grouse called "kata" lives on the edges of desert wastes. When frightened they alight on the sand and sprawl out to hide, their color blending with the sand so perfectly as to render them unnoticeable to a man standing a few yards away.

Eagles, vultures, buzzards, and various hawks, to say nothing of the awkward old ostrich, are common enough.

Except for the lizard family, reptiles are rare, and no poisonous snakes, save the "afal" and the "rukta," both of the viper family, are found in all Arabia. There are no scorpions, however, and centipedes; and in old houses on the west coast a very dangerous spider ("Abu Hanekin") makes life miserable for the Arab tired business man.

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